also making efforts. As and when we get that kind of financial support, we will be able to take up more lines. Right now we are in the process of confining to the track of 6000 kms. which we have already taken up.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, gauge conversion is actually a good thing not only from the point of view of national development but also from the point of view of giving employment to the rural people of our country. Now the Minister has said that 6000 kms. line has been taken up for conversion into broad gauge, but I have to make one point at the time of allocating broad gauge conversion to various States there is a total discrimination. The reason is the backwardness of the State is not taken care of and an uneven distribution is taking place. I have no quarrel over the issue that Karnataka is being favoured in this regard, but Tamil Nadu has been ignored that is my point. My point is that only one broad gauge line is there and there is a demand from the people of Tamil Nadu and also from my Stete. *(Interruptions)*. My hon. friend is also saying about Andhra Pradesh also. From Madurai to Madras the traffic is heavy and conversion is not taken care of. Therefore, I would like to know the criterion that is being followed and whether there is an even distribution or not.

SHRI C. K. JAFFAR SHARIEF: I am sorry, there is a mistaken notion. It is not distributed on the basis of States. The programme is based on one single route. The railway line is not confined to any particular State. We have taken it up from Delhi to Ahmedabad. From there to Miraj and from Miraj to Bangalore. So, it is based on the route. The idea is to attract the road traffic to the rail traffic. It is based on one single route. That is why you feel somewhere it is more and somewhere it is less. In the gauge conversion programme the lion share has gone to Rajasthan, not to any other State.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next Question.

**Setting up of Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Salt Lake, Calcutta**

*303. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the proposal to set up a Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Salt Lake, Calcutta is under active consideration of the Government of India as a memorial of the eminent Historian, ex-Union Minister, diplomat and Governor of West Bengal late Syed Nurul Hassan; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

**श्री मोहम्मद अमीन :** सर, ऐसा लगता है कि मंत्री जी ने इस सिलसिले में जो खतो-किताबत हुई है, उसका रिकार्ड देखा नहीं है। टाईम नहीं है, मैं सिर्फ एक लेटर पढ़ देता हूं प्रणव मुखर्जी साहब का जो इस सदन में अब आ रहे हैं। उसका एक पैराग्राफ है—

"Creation of Regional Institutes of Excellence in the field of Medical Sciences by the Central Government will be considered while finalising the Eighth Plan. I assure you that during the formulation of the 8th Plan if the scheme of establishment of Post-Graduate Institute is under Central Health Sector, priority would be accorded to Calcutta so that the long felt need of not only West Bengal but also North-Eastern region and adjoining states are fulfilled."

तो यह प्रणव मुखर्जी साहब, जो प्लानिंग कमीशन के डिप्टि चेयरमैन थे, उन्होंने पश्चिम बंगाल की सरकार को लिखा है। इसके बावजूद मंत्री जी कहते हैं कि यह सवाल पैदा नहीं होता है।

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR: Sir, there are requests from various States for the establishment of such type of Institutes in their respective States. The Government has formed a committee to look into the whole problem, and the committee has also given its report. After going through the whole report the Central Government has decided that because establishment of one such Institute requires almost Rs. 200 crores, and the demand being so large from all over the country, it will be very difficult to allocate any money from the Health budget because we have other commitments to fulfil and establishment of such type of Institutes will be a very costly affair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

## WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Assistance offered by Israel to India**

*304. SHRI PASUMPON THA. KIRUTTINAN:
SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Foreign Minister of Israel visited India a few months ago and offered his country's help to India in combating terrorism in this country;

(b) if so, what type of assistance was offered and the reaction of the Government of India in the matter;

(c) whether the Government of India has taken into consideration the possible fall out of Israel's offer from the Arab nations, particularly the P.L.O.; and

(d) what other issues were discussed between the representatives of two Governments during the said visit and the reaction of the Government of India in each case?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) No, Sir. The Foreign Minister of Israel, during his visit to India from May 17 to 19, 1993 did not proffer any proposal to help India combat terrorism. Nor was any such matter discussed.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) Possibilities of bilateral co-operation in areas like agriculture, water management, solar energy, trade, tourism, and culture were discussed. The Government of India favourably reacted to the possibilities of a mutually beneficial co-operation between the two countries in these areas. Views were also exchanged on regional and international issues, in particular, the prospects for an Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

**Cherrapunji A Wet Desert**

*305. SHRIMATI CHANDRIKA ABHINANDAN JAIN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that Cherrapunji in Assam, once the wettest place on earth, has now been reduced to a wet desert;

(b) if so, the reasons which lead to this situation; and

(c) the steps Government have taken or propose to take to bring back the place to lush green hills?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) The Ministry is aware of the fact that the areas in and around Cherrapunji, which receive very high rainfall, are highly degraded with very low water retention capacity. Much of the area is highly exposed and the precipitation received during the monsoon mostly drains away as run off there being very little infiltration in the ground. The areas in an around Cherrapunji are under the control of Autonomous District Council or private individuals. There are no Forest areas under the control of the State Forest Department around this region.

It has been indicated by the State Government of Meghalaya that forest areas controlled by the District Councils & individuals have been subjected to unscientific, unregulated and heavy deforestation, besides extensive shifting cultivation. In the case of Cherrapunji, the degradation has been further aggravated because of very steep topography of the locality as well as heavy rains (1000—1500 cm. per annum) which the region receives. This has resulted in accelerated loss of soil cover, thereby impairing the regenerative capacity and productivity of the area.

(c) In view of the fact that the area in question has difficult terrain and shallow soil depth, taking up planting activities is an uphill task. However, the Social Forestry Wing of the Forest Department of Meghalaya has taken steps to provide green cover over the barran lands and to improve the degraded scrub forests in this area. The District Council has also been involved in the activity of afforestation by way of providing technical manpower on deputation and by extending grants-in-aid for raising, maintenance and protection of forests.

**Konkan Railway Project**

*306. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the work on Konkan Railway Project has come to a standstill because of resistance from vested interests calling for realignment of the originally planned routes;

(b) whether such issues were not sorted out at the commencement of the project and the reasons due to which Government is permitting such disruptive forces to stall the project at this advanced stage of construction; and

(c) whether Government have taken note of the contention of the Konkan Railway Corporation that any further delay in continuance of the work would entail cost and time over-runs and may even force the Konkan Railway Project to wind up its operations; if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?